

forward from the ranks of his followers who were lined up on one side of the market, and joined the group of horsemen that surrounded the King's person.

Precisely what passed during the next two minutes seems to have been afterwards forgotten or differently reported by the actors in the scene. When the story came to be put down, every chronicler obtained different details.¹ By one account he then and there presented the petition for abolition of outlawry, disendowment of the Church, and free forestry. Whatever his demands were, he treated the King with friendly familiarity and his attendants with contempt, till the lords and citizens, who were no longer in the humour to cringe to the peasants, answered him back roundly. By some accounts they themselves acted as if wishing to bring on a quarrel, and this is sufficiently probable. Tyler drew his weapon on the Mayor, who tried to arrest him; Walworth, who like the rest of the company was wearing armour under his official robes, struck his opponent back. Others joined in to make an end of Tyler. It was practically the first blow struck in defence of authority since the rebels had appeared on Blackheath. Its moral effect was a complete success, for it was struck at exactly the right moment. The day before, at Mile End, it would probably have only led to disaster, but now the panic of the upper classes was over, and they were ready to obey the first signal for a rally; while the rebels, having got most of what they wanted, were half-hearted in support of leaders whom they perhaps regarded as too forward. Yet it was, in the circumstances, an act of great daring. The multitude could not at first see clearly, from the other side of the market-place, what was going on. Some said, * They are making him a knight.' The next moment the horse came dashing across the great square towards them, trailing its murdered rider; the real nature of the scuffle was evident, and a thousand bows were bent in the direction of the King and his party. The danger was awful. If one man had drawn his bow at a venture, it would probably have been the signal for a general discharge. But the boy on whom all depended never lost his head for a moment. With the coolness of

¹ Froiss., ii. 476-7; Wals., i. 464-5; Knighton, ii. 137; *Cont. Eulog.*, iii. 353-4; Higden, ix. 5-6; *H. R.*, 518-20. On the value of the latter as an authority on this scerua- see Kriehn, 266-8, 469.